

Marine Recreational Information Program
Executive Steering Committee Meeting Summary
March 27 & 28, 2007
Seattle, Washington

Meeting Attendees:

John Boreman – Director, NOAA Fisheries Office of Science & Technology; ESC Chair
Jay Ginter – NOAA Fisheries, Alaska Region (for Doug Mecum)
Frank Almeida – Deputy Director, NOAA Fisheries Northeast Science Center (for Nancy Thompson)
Vince O’Shea – Executive Director, Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission
Larry Simpson – Executive Director, Gulf States Marine Fisheries Commission
Randy Fisher – Executive Director, Pacific States Marine Fisheries Commission
Kitty Simonds – Executive Director, Western Pacific Fishery Management Council
Miguel Rolon – Executive Director, Caribbean Fishery Management Council
Bob Fletcher – Chair, Recreational Fisheries Subcommittee, MAFAC
Tom Gleason – NOAA Fisheries, Office of Management & Budget; ESC Executive Secretariat

The Marine Recreational Information Program Executive Steering Committee (ESC), Chaired by Dr. John Boreman, Director of NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) Office of Science & Technology, met in Seattle, Washington on March 27 – 28, 2007 for its inaugural meeting. The ESC addressed the following topics:

Review of Development Plan; General Discussion

The Executive Steering Committee (ESC) can and should amend the Development Plan for Improving Recreational Fisheries Statistics prepared by NOAA’s National Marine Fisheries Service (NOAA Fisheries) as necessary to accomplish the goal of upgrading NOAA Fisheries’ recreational fishing data collection program. The Development Plan is posted at:
http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/RecSurveyUpgrade/documents/Rec_Implementation_Plan_02092007.pdf

The Operations Team (to be established by the ESC) should look to the 2006 National Research Council (NRC) report on Recreational Fisheries Survey Methods and the proceedings of the Recreational Fisheries Statistics Management Framework Workshop held in Denver, Colorado, as a starting point for its work. The Operations Team (OT) should utilize the findings and recommendations from the NRC report, the Denver workshop, and the regional conference calls held this past winter with constituents.

The Office of Science and Technology has already begun mining existing data to identify and perhaps quantify potential biases. The ESC agreed that this effort should continue under the auspices of the Operations Team. Specifically, the Operations Team may wish to form one or more working groups to identify:

1. Potential biases that can be examined by existing data;
2. Potential biases that cannot be evaluated with existing data, but could be evaluated with new data collected by current surveys; and

3. Potential biases that require new data collection programs for evaluation.

The ESC developed the following recommendations on the Development Plan:

- The Operations Team will prioritize the NRC and Denver workshop recommendations, and submit the list to the ESC for review and approval.
- The Operations Team will identify core information that must be standardized across all regions, but the regions will have flexibility to determine how best to achieve those standards.
- The Operations Team will have national representation. Work groups established by the Operations Team will have regional representation to address issues unique to each region.
- The Operations Team may form work groups as needed. Membership on work groups can be rolling in order to address regional priorities.
- The current Development Plan sections on the Operations Team and the Design and Analysis Group are overly prescriptive and should be amended to provide greater flexibility.

Establishment of Operations Team

The Executive Steering Committee developed the following criteria for selecting members for the Operations Team. This is a general list of criteria, not a prioritized list and it is possible that some members of the Operations Team will fulfill more than one criteria.

- Regional representation (Western Pacific, Alaska, Pacific Coast, Gulf of Mexico, Atlantic Coast, Caribbean)
- Fishery management plan specialist
- Stock assessment scientist
- Survey statistician
- Constituent representative who is currently a member of MAFAC, a fishery management council, or interstate marine fisheries commission (including subcommittee members)

The Executive Steering Committee discussed candidates for the Operations Team. During the first week of April, the ESC Chair, John Boreman, will prepare and distribute invitational letters to serve on the Operations Team with the goal of having the OT fully staffed by May 1, 2007. In the interim, Rob Andrews of NOAA Fisheries Office of Science and Technology will serve as the pro-tem chair of the Operations Team. The ESC is seeking a candidate with good leadership skills and a history of interaction with State Directors for the permanent OT chair position.

Charge to the Operations Team

The Executive Steering Committee developed the following charge to the Operations Team:

- Review the membership of the Operations Team and advise the ESC if additional members are needed to balance expertise and representation, along with a list of suggested nominees.
- Develop a list of recommendations for upgrading the marine recreational fisheries statistics survey (MRFSS) emanating from the NRC review, the Denver workshop, the regional conference calls with constituents, and the Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization. Once the list is developed, for each of the six

regions advise ESC on which recommendations are already being addressed, which should be addressed (in order of priority), and which should not be addressed. Priorities should be based on the following unranked standards:

- i. Responds to NRC recommendations
- ii. Responds to science needs (e.g., minimum data standards for precision, accuracy, and database management)
- iii. Responds to regional management needs
- iv. Addresses HMS survey deficiencies
- Upon approval of the ESC of the sorted list, develop a work plan including anticipated costs that covers each of the regional priorities that need to be addressed and submit it to the ESC for approval. The work plan should include milestones and deliverables for achieving goal based on identified priorities.
- The ESC recommends the following business rules for the Operations Team:
 - i. Decisions should be based on consensus agreement
 - ii. Reports to the ESC should be in writing and should only include actions taken and accomplishments.

Communications and Education Group

As specified in the Development Plan, the Executive Steering Committee will establish a Communications and Education Group (CEG). The role of the CEG will be to advise the ESC on how best to gain input from the fishing community during the survey upgrade process and after the new system of surveys is implemented in January 2009. The CEG's initial task will be to provide a detailed communications and outreach plan for review and approval by the ESC. The CEG will report directly to the ESC and will coordinate with the OT, MAFAC, DAG and other working groups to inform constituents about the development and progress of survey improvement efforts.

The ESC discussed candidates for the CEG and decided to consult with communications experts in their respective regions to solicit additional candidates.

To facilitate communication and outreach efforts, the ESC recommends that the interstate marine fisheries commissions and regional fishery management councils provide links from their websites to the NOAA Fisheries Recreational Fisheries Statistics Improvement website at: <http://www.st.nmfs.noaa.gov/RecSurveyUpgrade/RecSurveyUpgrade.html>

Timelines

A. Survey Redesign

Section 201 of the Magnuson-Stevens Act Reauthorization set a January 1, 2009 deadline for implementation of an improved Marine Recreational Fishery Statistics Survey program. Working backward from that date, and allowing time for public comment on the draft survey redesign, the ESC established the following timeline:

Jan. 2009	Implement new Marine Recreational Information (MRI) program
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July 2008 Plan for new Marine Recreational Information system of surveys out for public comment

June 1, 2008 Operations Team completes work (including survey redesign)

June 1, 2007 Operations Team starts work

May 2007 Operations Team prepares detailed Development Plan with milestones and deliverables

April 2007 Establish Operations Team

B. National Registry

The reauthorized Magnuson-Stevens Act requires the creation of Federal, regionally based registry programs for marine recreational fishing that can be used to support more efficient statistical surveys. As with the survey redesign, the deadline for creating a national registry is January 1, 2009.

Naming the New Survey Program:

To signal a new era for the Marine Recreational Fisheries Statistics Survey Program, the ESC agreed to re-name the new program the *Marine Recreational Information (MRI) Program*.

Next ESC Meetings:

April 30, 2007
Coronado, CA

May 24, 2007
Video/teleconference
Objective: review OT's detailed Development Plan

June 7, 2007 (tentative)
Washington, DC

ESC Action items:

Have position on minimum information requirements ready for handout and discussion at the NOAA Fisheries/State Fisheries Directors meeting, 30 April – 3 May 2007, in San Diego, California.